

Message Text

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SUBJ: ASSESSMEN CLIMATE OF OPINION VIS-A-VIS U.S.

REF; USIA 10667C

OVERALL ASSESSMENT: FALL OF CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM, ESPECIALLY
SPEED OF COLLAPSE, LEFT CHILEAN MEDIA AND GENERAL PUBLIC,
BOTH CIVIL AND MILITARY, STUNNED AND DISMAYED. IN SIMPLISTIC,
BLACK-AND-WHITE TERMS, THEIR THOUGHTS CENTERED NOT ON
U.S. SUPPORT IN MEN AND TREASURE FOR MORE THAN DECADE FOR
SOUTHEAST ASIA, BUT ON WHAT THEY BELIEVED TO BE LACK OF
SUFFICIENT U.S. SUPPORT SINCE SIGNING OF PARIS AGREEMENT,
AND PARTICULARLY, U.S. NEAR ACQUIESCENCE IN WHAT THEY
DEYZRIBNHFUJ"GZTOIADEWCUSY ICOHSRNATIONAL MARXIS.. CHILEANS
CONSIDERED U.S. AS WORLD LEADER IN STRUGGLE AGAINST INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNISM. TRAGEDY IN INDOCHINA REGARDED AS MAJOR DEFEAT FOR
U.S. IN THIS STRUGGLE. MOREOVER, IT REPRESENTED IN CHILEAN
MIND WEAKENING OF DETERMINATION OF AMERICAN PEOPLE AND
CONGRESS TO CONTAIN INTERNATIONAL CMMUNISM AS A RESULT OF
DETENTE POLICY. U.S. COMMITMENTS NO LONGER HELD OLD CREDIBILITY,
AND WAR WEARINESS OF AMERICAN PEOPLE MIGHT NOT ONLY PARALYZE
ADMINISTRATION'S FOREIGN POLICY BUT ALSO PROVIDE NEW INCENTIVE
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FOR COMMUNIST EXPANSION. WE LEFT OUR FRIENDS OUT IN COLD

AND IN SO DOING, U.S. LOST FACE AS DEPENDABLE ALLY. CHILEANS, THEMSELVES, APPEARED IN PERSONAL CONVERSATIONS UNHAPPY AND ILL AT EASE WHEN HOLDING FORTH THESE VIEWS, SINCE THEY FEEL STRONGLY THAT CHILE MUST DEPEND ON US. POWER AND PRESTIGE. MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT TURNED THESE PESSIMISTIC VIEWS AROUND COONSIDERABLY, AND CHILEAN WERE PLEASED TO SEE U.S. REASSERT ITS POSITION. PRESIDENT FORD'S DECISION WAS DESCRIBED BY CONTACTS AS "BRAVE" AND "COURAGEOUS". PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO EUROPE ALSO RECEIVED HIGH MARKS, ESPECIALLY NATO MEETING AND TALKS WITH SADAT. THIS IS ALL PART OF PICTURE NOW EMERGING. U.S. IS RECLAIMING ITS POSITION AS WORLD LEADER AND COUNTERFORCE TO COMMUNIST ADVENTURES IN OTHER PARTS OF WORLD. THEY ALSO SEE ENCOURAGING SIGNS IN RECENT REMARKS BY PRESIDENT AND CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS ON DESIRE FOR GREATER COOPERATION BETWEEN BOTH BRANCHES IN FOREIGN POLICY SPHERE. BUT THESE CHILEAN VIEWS ARE STILL TEMPERED. DOUBTS REMAIN. THEY FEEL AND TALK THIS WAY NOW OUT OF NEED TO BELIEVE THE U.S. IS TRULY REASSESSING ITS POLICY VIS-A-VIS COMMUNISM AND DETENTE. IN MONTHS AHEAD, CHILEANS WILL BE WATCHING CLOSELY U.S. ACTIONS AND REACTIONS WITH MAJOR COMMUNIST NATIONS, LOOKING FOR SIGNS THAT U.S. HAS RECOVERED FROM AFTERMATH OF INDOCHINA. HOWEVER, WE EXPECT LONG-TERM RESIDUE TO REMAIN. CHILEANS WILL REMEMBER NOT WHAT U.S. PUT INTO INDOCHINA, ONLY HOW IT ENDED, AND CHILEAN BELIEVE THEY CAN NO LONGER COUNT ON US AS MUCH THEY THOUGHT THEY COULD BEFORE INDOCHINA COLLAPSED. VILLARREAL

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